

NUMBER 95

RELIGIOUS.

Bishop - Elect McLaren on
"Prayer and Law."

An Able and Readable Paper on

Moody Gives His Opinion of the
Result of His Brooklyn
Labors.

He Is Cheered by What He
Has Done---Mr. Beech-
er's View.

The Orthodox Friends Gather in
Council and Exchange Ex-
periences.

Character of Roman Catholic Churches.

Notes and Personals at Home and Abroad---Church Services To-Day.

PRAYER AND LAW.

As Dr. McLaren will, in all probability, within a few days enter upon the discharge of his duties as Bishop of Illinois, there will be a general desire throughout the State, and especially in Chicago, to have definite information in regard to his intellectual character, and the manner in which he may be expected to perform the great work to which he is here called as a religious teacher. It is scarcely to be expected that any special discourse, delivered immediately after his consecration as a Bishop, will be a fair specimen, or give the full measure of his powers. He will be somewhat in the position of David

At all events, the public generally will be interested in knowing what Dr. McLaren has heretofore regarded as his ordinary work as a minister of Christ, and how he has performed it. This natural desire will, perhaps, be as well met by an article published by Dr. McLaren in the *Church Review* for July last, as to anything which the public has access. The article is

The following terrible utterance is quoted by Farrer in his Critical History of *Free Thought* from the writings of the famous English scientist:

"Science has shown that there is no God under the dominion of general laws, and that there is no special providence. Nature acts with fearful uniformity; man as false, absolute as tyranny, merciless as death; and that the only conceivable morality for intolerable to propitiate, it has no ear for prayer, no heart for sympathy, no room to save."

This is the plausible and dangerous error respecting

Some doubt in many minds and positive unbelief in others. This error, in its ultimate point of arrival, is a denial of God. Those who have reached its logical terminus cannot argue the case for God, for a positive denial of the Divine Personality, then our work must be the demonstration of a God, and not of the beautiful consistency there is between prayer and the Christian life.

All who believe in prayer at all are agreed that it has productive or reflexive effects. It elevates the mind and tranquillises the troubled breast. It tends to increase the power of the faculties, and to submerge the creature with reverence towards his Creator. At this point some think they find the limit of its efficacy. They hold that the influence of prayer is exhausted in the elevation of the mind, and the primary constituents reducing it to a meaningless and self-centred and themselves to pessimists. If prayer does not

be actualized without it, it would be better to give up the yearning for a higher knowledge than is obtainable only as the heart recognizes its direct influence. The light of the moon presupposes the light of a sun.

It is the allegation that natural law furnishes evidence of the inefficiency of prayer upon God is not the argument of science. The objection comes from certain antagonists of Christianity who with partisan aloofness generalize from the incomplete inductions of physiology. The objection is the same as that which is advanced by some scientists who have espoused the objection, that it is believed that in them the characteristic modality of those who sit at Nature's feet to learn her secrets has been lost. The objection is the same as that which a precipitancy that is engendered by the fray, quence has not gone so far. For the present the question is between man of science and man of science.

of physical phenomena and their immediate uses, by which much that was formerly classified as supernatural was now attributed to the sphere of the natural, there is a disposition to be pronounced to elevate and emphasize law at the expense of the Law-giver. While research in all the fields of nature, with the increasing facilities of investigation and the aid of modern instruments and methods, has led to a clearer perception of the reign of law, the principle of uniformity, have lifted law to prominence, while they have seemed to banish God to a remote corner of observation. The clouds of the far-out-see sun; Daily the glimmering nebula. They say that astronomy reveals the mathematical precision of, even in those phenomena of the heavens, such as the stars, which were formerly regarded as the more remote period as supernatural. Geology finds hidden depths of the earth to the rule of law, even

power is irresistible, his progress is upon a line of
and continuity, its dominion is fixed, uniform, un-
shaken, undisturbed. It yields to no interference, and
its own providence. So the great theorems are
demonstrated. On other days, the Deity is more
loving, and identifies their God with the universe. Un-
willing to commit themselves to Atheism or
theism, retain the Theistic idea, but blind God by
the claims of the intellect.

This epicurean sweep of modern thought away from
supernatural and the providential attacks itself
in the literature of the day and in the porten-
tousness of the present. It is the first step toward
theism. It is idle to ignore the differentiation of their
theism, or to undertake the necessity of showing that
the moral government of God is not a supernatural
power.

It is evident that we should first of all

terms. What, for instance, do we mean when we say "Law"? It seems to me that there are two ways of approaching the question. One is to take the description I may, from the divine side, I perceive, had in the mode in which God acts or the method He has chosen of controlling the universe. Law is, simply, the giving of order to the expression, in minimum ways, of infinite intelligence, power, and wisdom. But if I approach the word from the human side, it means nothing more than the observed phases of Nature and history operating according to certain uniformities. The uniformities of the realist styles "laws," then, are simply facts: the fact of gravitation, the fact of growth in germs, the fact of electricity and the like. In which case the facts themselves, not the law, are the Law-giver governing; in the latter is nature governed. The naturalist looks for

and a partial experience. The supernaturalist not only does not disprove the hypothesis of a God, but accepts it as being also the first great truth, surveys the cosmos from the lofty standpoint of the Throne the Infinite. As men adopt one or the other of the methods of doing law, the Infinite is the Divine Intervention in the affairs of the universe. The argument from observation and experience is a truism, may be employed in the interest of our view. We can adopt the objection's words of speech. We will listen while he renews the words of his explorations in the field of nature, not accepting his deductions, we will not hesitate to believe that he has everywhere discovered the truth.

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